AMIC Workshop on Management of Environmental Information Resources for Journalists : Singapore, Nov 9-14, 1998 : [workshop report]

1998

Paper No. 1

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ON
MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION RESOURCES
FOR JOURNALISTS, SINGAPORE, 9-14 NOVEMBER, 1998

Introduction:

The Workshop on Management of Environmental Information Resources for Journalists was held in Singapore from 9th to 14th November 1998. It was organized by the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) in collaboration with the School of Communication Studies Nanyang Technological University (SCS-NTU), Singapore and supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Manila.

Workshop Preparations:

The workshop preparations began in late January, when Dr. Joseph Weinstock, Senior Sector Specialist for Sustainable Development, ADB, informed AMIC that the funds for the proposed workshop had been approved. In February, a list of participating countries and a tentative programme were submitted. Letters to identify participants were sent out to print media agencies in Southeast Asia in March/April. Confirmations were received from participants in May/June and the list of participants was drawn in July. Workshop venues (River View Hotel and Multimedia Lab, SCS-NTU) were confirmed in August.

Resource Persons:

The following were the resource persons:
1. Dr. Joseph A. Sommerville, Lecturer, SCS-NTU, (Principal Resource Person and lecturer for the management module).
2. Dr. Brian Massey, Lecturer, SCS-NTU (lecturer for the editing/skills development module)
3. Dr. Wimala Ponniah, Environmental Consultant, Singapore (Lecturer for the concept module)
4. Dr. Sankaran Ramanathan, Coordinator, Special Projects, AMIC (Lecturer for the skills development module)
5. Mr. David Lazarus, Chief, United Nations Information Service, Bangkok (lecturer for the concept module).

Programme:

The workshop programme was designed to encompass three modules, as follows:
- A concept module dealing with the overview and background of environment problems in the region and participants' responsibilities as journalists: this was covered during the first two days, 9th and 10th November.
- A skills development module whereby participants discussed problems in reporting about environmental issues in the region and possible solutions,

and acquired advance writing and editing skills; this was accomplished on third and fourth days, 11th and 12th November.

- A management module, whereby participants were exposed to the new information technologies and worked together to create and set up an environmental information Website called *ECANET* (*Environmental Communication Asia Network*); this was accomplished on the fifth and sixth days, 13th and 14th November.

(*Please see Appendix One – Workshop Timetable*)

Opening and Closing Ceremonies:

The opening ceremony was held on the morning of 9th November at River View Hotel, which was the workshop venue for the first two days. Welcome addresses were delivered by Mr. Vijay Menon, Secretary-General AMIC and Prof. Eddie C.Y. Kuo, Dean SCS-NTU. Mr. Nessim Ahmad, Programme Specialist, ADB delivered the keynote address. (*See Appendix Two – Papers Presented*)

The closing ceremony was held at the Master's Degree Room, SCS-NTU at 12.30 p.m. on 14th November. Prof. Kuo and Mr. Menon gave out the certificates of attendance to participants.

Participants

Twenty participants from nine Southeast Asian countries attended the concept module sessions at River View Hotel, while 18 participants attended all sessions of the workshop.

(*See Appendix Three – List of Participants*)

Participants' Evaluation:

Of the 18 participants, 16 submitted the completed evaluation forms. The Singapore participants did not evaluate "hotel accommodation" as it was not applicable to them (*See Appendix Four – Evaluation Summary*).

Overall, participants gave high ratings for the various criteria, with "exposure to new communication technologies" receiving the highest rating (4.81 out of 5.00). Other criteria which received high ratings were "relevance of workshop to your work" (4.75), "overall value of the workshop to you" (4.62) and "overall quality of workshop" (4.38).

Participants suggested that workshops of a similar nature should be regularly held over a 5-year period. Some of them felt that the workshops should focus on new information technologies, especially Website creation and design.

Workshop Output:

1. Background papers on environmental problems in the region.
2. Participants were assisted in improving writing skills for environmental stories.
3. Information was provided on available database and to access relevant information.
4. Training was provided on management of environmental information resources, Including access to remote databases.
5. The Website *ECANET* was created.
   (*See Appendix Five – Printout of ECANET Website*)
6. Each participant was give a CD-ROM containing the software for ECANET
   (*See Appendix Six – ECANET CD-ROM*)
7. Participants have started applying skills learnt at the workshop.

Summary and Conclusion:

The workshop achieved its primary objectives, viz.

(a) To provide mid-level journalists with a comprehensive overview of environmental problems in Asia;

(b) To provide the necessary tolls for analysis of environmental issues with the frameworks of sustainable development;

(c) To upgrade skills in reporting, formulation and writing of environmental stories;

(d) To provide journalists with skills in data-gathering and networking arising from the development of the information superhighway, especially the *Internet*. and

(e) A Website, *ECANET* was created.

The workshop has contributed to the long-term objective to promote knowledge and awareness of environmental issues and to ensure more frequent and improved environmental reporting about Asia. As this workshop was aimed at the print media it would be most useful to organize similar workshops for broadcasters.

Prepared by AMIC, Singapore,
February, 2ⁿᵈ 1999.

THE WORKSHOP ON MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR JOURNALISTS, SINGAPORE, 9-14 NOVEMBER, 1998

APPENDIX ONE

WORKSHOP TIMETABLE

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AMIC

SINGAPORE